

## **Blindsight** by **DanniZatara**

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**Summary:** How much can we see without our eyes? Following Will's return from The Upside Down and Eleven's disappearance, Mike and Nancy Wheeler search for some semblance of normal. However, alternate dimensions, faceless monsters, and certain government agents are not quite finished with them yet. Normal is a relative term, anyway. (An imaginary Volume 2).

# Blindsight

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### *Chapter One*

Nearing seven o'clock on a bitterly cold January morning, Nancy Wheeler's eyes fluttered open and she took a moment to lay silently in bed, listening to the unforgiving wind rustling through tree branches outside, a stark contrast to the soft noises emanating from her parents' actions in the kitchen below. They would both be awake by now, Dad sipping his black coffee as he read through the morning paper while Mom toiled away, making breakfast. Since it was the first day back to school, breakfast would probably consist of bacon and eggs, Mom's hearty send off for her two children returning to classes after the Christmas holiday.

Nancy slowly sidled out of bed, shivering in the sudden cold as she left the warmth of her blankets. Despite the chill, she felt well rested and savoured the feeling, the lightness of her eyelids and muscles. There hadn't been any nightmares last night, a welcome reprieve from the nearly nightly terrors she had been plagued with since... everything that had happened. Her horrific visit to the Upside Down, Barb's disappearance and death, the encounter with a monster she could only imagine was now dead. It had been difficult to sleep through the night since the end of November, when Will Byers had come home and a state resembling normal had returned to her life. Yet, Nancy knew she had been fundamentally changed by the events that had transpired. And she knew she was not alone in this.

Her younger brother, Mike, was going through something similar. Nancy recalled that night outside the school, when she and Mike had promised to always be honest with each other. He had acted, as any young teenage boy would, with disgust at her guess that he 'liked' Eleven. Nancy had known in that moment that his denial was feigned, yet this knowledge was confirmed to her over the course of the last several weeks, since Eleven had disappeared with the monster that haunted her dreams. Nancy had lost her best friend and Mike had lost his first love. There was no more normal, though they were both pretending nicely.

Sometimes, Nancy would wake from a nightmare and lie awake for hours. Sometimes she would hear Mike muttering fearfully in his sleep. And sometimes, for the both their sakes, she would quietly creep downstairs, grab a bag of chocolate chip cookies, and return to Mike's room to talk with him. They had bonded since Will's return and Nancy was glad about that, at least. She was, perhaps selfishly, happy to know that someone really understood what she was dealing with. Less selfishly, she was also pleased that Steve and Mike seemed to growing closer as well, Steve taking on the role of the big brother Nancy always wished she had been able to fulfill for Mike.

Stretching, Nancy slid into her slippers and left her room, deciding to wake Mike and get some breakfast before preparing for her day — beginning with meeting Steve picking her up for school. Nancy stood outside Mike's door, listening for a moment before knocking, softly, twice.

"Come in," Mike's sleepy voice sounded from the other side of the door. Nancy opened it and peered into the dark. Mike was awake, though still lying in bed, the blue comforter pulled up to his nose. He was on his side, staring at the walkie-talkie resting on his bedside table.

"Morning," Nancy smiled, "Mom's making bacon.

Mike's head fully emerged from the blanket and he smiled back.

"Cool."

"See you downstairs?"

"Yeah," Mike nodded absently and yawned. Nancy smiled again and closed the door. She was sure that going back to school would be good for Mike — it would distract him, allow him to think about something other than Eleven. She made her way downstairs, said good morning to her parents, and gave Holly, who was sitting in her high chair, a quick kiss on the top of the head before settling in for breakfast.

"I kept track, I swear," Dustin held a hand over his heart, "Ninety-four hours of Atari since Christmas. No way you ladies can beat that."

The boys laughed, gathered around Will's locker, as he unzipped his coat and attempted to cram the garment into the small space.

"You should be blind," Lucas grinned and Dustin shook his head, about to respond when Will, having finally succeeded in placing his coat in his locker, turned back toward the group.

"We should go sledding after school," he suggested.

"No way!" Dustin shook his head again, "We've got to finish the campaign at Mike's."

"But there's like ten feet of snow outside!" Will exclaimed, "What do you think Mike? ... Mike?"

The boys received no response and turned their attention to Mike, whose attention was very obviously not on their conversation. He was staring at the bulletin board across the hall, a nearly inscrutable expression on his face. The boys followed his gaze to a brightly coloured piece of paper hung on the board:

*HAWKINS MIDDLE SCHOOL SNOW-BALL*

*10 JANUARY 6PM*

*TICKETS ON SALE NOW!*

A momentary silence hung over the group and, before anyone could think of what to say, the morning bell rang, signalling the beginning of first period.

"Come on," Lucas said, clapping Mike on the shoulder, "Don't wanna be late for English. I heard we have a new teacher."